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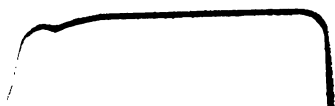
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The STORY of
A DONKEY
BY MME. DE SEGUR



THE STORY OF A DONKEY

This One



NPR7-ZAB-T5DN

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DEDICATION

TO MY PRESENT LITTLE MASTER, HARRY

MY DEAR LITTLE MASTER:

You have been kind to *me*, but you have spoken contemptuously of donkeys in general. I want you to know better what sort of animals donkeys really are, and so I have written for you this story of my life. You will see, my dear little Master, that we donkeys have been, and still are, often badly treated by human beings. We are often very nice, indeed; but I must also confess that in my youth I sometimes behaved very badly, and you will see how I was punished for it, and how unhappy I was, and how at last I repented, and my friends and masters forgave me and were kind to me again. So, when you have read my history, you won't say any more "as stupid as a donkey," or "as obstinate as a donkey," but "as sensible as a donkey," "as clever as a donkey," or "as gentle as a donkey."

Hee-haw! my dear little Master, hee-haw! I hope you will never be like what *I* was when I was young.

I remain,

Your obedient servant,

NEDDY.

(vii)

INTRODUCTION

IN this book a donkey tells the story of his life and adventures, because, as he says: “I want you to treat all of us donkeys kindly, and to remember that we are often much more sensible than some human beings.”

In the preface to the original edition—*Mémoires D'un Ane*, published in France in 1860—the donkey speaks very highly of his own wit and intelligence, claiming those qualities in a larger degree than most donkeys possess; and throughout the book he is quite proud of his successes in outwitting some of his masters and mistresses—in fact, his story begins with an account of a trick he played in his youth.

The author of *The Story of a Donkey* was the daughter of Count Rostopchine, Governor of

Moscow in 1812, when Napoleon Bonaparte made his disastrous retreat from that city. She became the wife of Count de Ségur, one of the proudest nobles of France, some ten years later, but not until she was nearly sixty years of age did she begin to write books for children, of which she has some twenty to her credit. This book is probably the most popular and entertaining of her works, but because much that appears in the original would interest only French boys and girls, in this version the scene has been taken to England, where donkeys are much more common than with us, and the interesting and amusing adventures of Neddy are told as happening in that country.

J. H. W.

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THE STORY OF A DONKEY

CHAPTER I

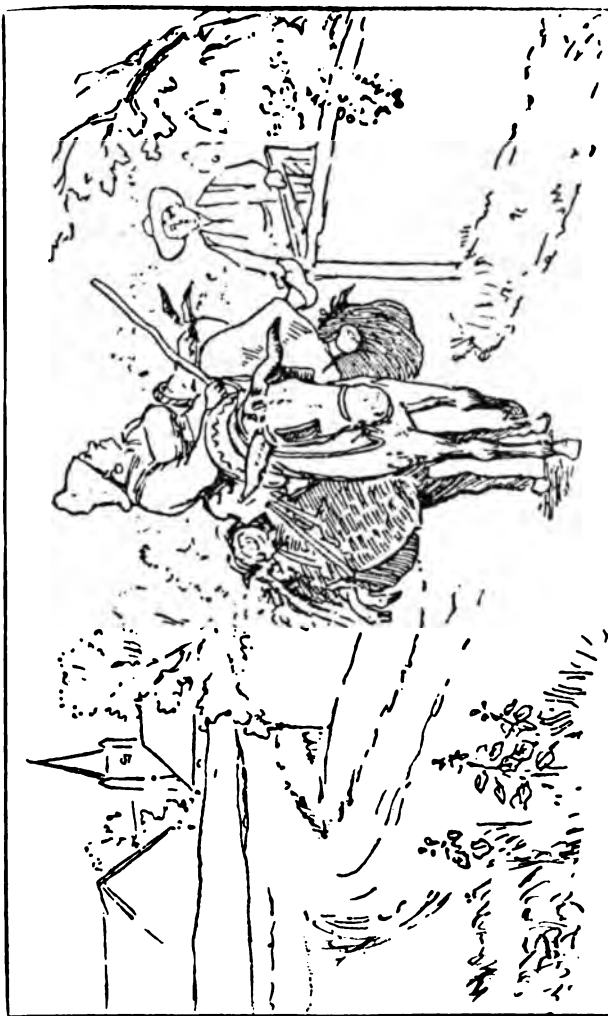
MARKET DAYS

MEN, poor things! can't be expected to know as much as donkeys, and so you probably don't know that there was a market in our country-town every Tuesday, and that at this market vegetables were sold, and butter and eggs and cheese and fruit and many other nice things.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

Tuesday was a miserable day for us poor donkeys, especially for me. I belonged to a farmer's wife, and she was very severe and ill-tempered. Just think! every week she used to load up my back with all the eggs her hens laid, all the butter and cheese she made from the milk of her cows, all the vegetables and fruit that were ready for market out of her garden, and then she got on the top of it all herself, and beat me with a hard, knotty stick because my poor thin legs did n't carry her, a great fat woman, and all that load besides, to market as fast as she liked. I trotted, I almost galloped, but that farmer's wife belabored me all the same. I used to get very angry at such cruelty and injustice; I tried to kick and knock her off, but I was loaded down too heavily, and so I could only wobble about from side to side; but I did have the satisfaction of knowing that she was well jolted. Then she would growl, "Ah, you wretched animal! see if I don't give you what for!" and began beating me again till I could scarcely keep on my legs.

One day we reached the market-town in this



THE SEVERE AND ILL-TEMPERED FARMER'S WIFE ADDS HER WEIGHT TO THE LOAD.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

way, and the baskets with which my poor back had been nearly crushed to pieces were taken off and set down upon the ground. My mistress hitched me up to a post, and went away to get her dinner. I was dying of hunger and thirst,



"SHE SEIZED HER STICK AND BEGAN TO BANG ME."

but nobody thought of offering me a single blade of grass or a drop of water; so while the farmer's wife was away, I managed to get my head close up to the basket of vegetables, and had some refreshment made up of several cab-

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

bages and lettuces. I never tasted anything so good.

I had just finished the last cabbage and the last lettuce in that basket when my mistress came back. She cried out when she saw the empty basket, and I looked at her with such an impudent and self-satisfied air, that she at once guessed that I was the culprit who had committed the crime. I won't repeat to you the nasty things she said to me; she was a very low person, and when she was angry she used language which was enough to make me blush, donkey as I was. So after heaping me with abuse, of which I took no notice beyond licking my lips and turning my back on her, she seized her stick and began to bang me so severely, that at last I lost patience, and launched out three kicks. The first kick broke her nose and two teeth, the second sprained her wrist, and the third knocked her flat.

A score of people at once set upon me and knocked me about. They picked up my mistress and carried her away, leaving me fastened to the post, by the side of which were spread out the



THE FARMER'S WIFE IS CARRIED AWAY AFTER BEING KICKED BY THE DONKEY.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

things I had brought to be sold in the market. I remained there a long while, and, finding that no one paid any more attention to me, I ate a second basketful of excellent vegetables, and then with my teeth I gnawed through the cord that tied



“‘I JUMPED CLEAN OVER THE HEDGE.’”

me up, and quietly took the road home. I did not intend to run away altogether; I had broken my mistress's nose, and hurt her wrist, and knocked her down, and I thought I was sufficiently revenged. The people at the farm had

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paid money for me, so I belonged to them, and it would n't be honest to run away.

Mary, my mistress's little girl, saw me come back.

"Hallo, here 's Neddy," she said, "how early he is! Jim, come and take off his pack-saddle."

"That wretched donkey," growled Jim, "always something to be done for him! Why is he all by himself? I expect he 's run away from mother. You beast!" he added, giving me a kick.

My saddle and bridle were taken off, and I galloped off to the meadow. Suddenly I heard shrieks. I looked over the hedge, and saw some men carrying my mistress home. Then I heard Jim say:

"I say, father, I 'm going to take the cart-whip, and I shall tie that donkey to a tree, and then whip him till he can't stand."

"All right, my lad," said my master, "but mind and don't kill him, for he cost money. I 'll sell him next fair-day."

I shuddered when I heard this. There was n't a moment to be lost. This time I did n't care

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

whether they lost their money or not. I just made a run and jumped clean over the hedge, and fled till I was out of sight, hearing, and lost to view in the depths of a beautiful large forest, where there was plenty of soft grass and moss to eat, and plenty of sparkling brooks to drink out of.

CHAPTER II

I FIND A NEW HOME

I LIVED in the forest for about a month, and enjoyed myself very much indeed, taking care every day to get farther and farther away from the village where my former master lived.

At last it began to get cold, for winter was coming on, and I thought it high time to look out for a comfortable home; so I trotted on right through the forest, and out at the other side, and after some days' traveling, I arrived at a village that I had never seen or heard of before. Here I felt I should be safe from pursuit.

Just outside the village there stood a little cottage in a garden quite by itself. It seemed very clean and neat. A good woman was sitting by the door doing some needlework. I thought



THE DONKEY SURPRISES THE GOOD WOMAN BY PUTTING HIS HEAD ON HER SHOULDER.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

she looked both kind and sad; so I went up to her, and put my head on her shoulder.

The good woman gave a shriek, and jumped up in a hurry.

I did not move, but lifted my face towards hers with a gentle and pleading look.



“‘GRANNY, MAY I STROKE HIM,’ HE SAID.”

“‘Poor thing!’” she said at last, “‘you don’t look a bad creature. If you don’t belong to any one, I should be glad of you to take the place of my poor Graycoat, who died the other day of old age; and in that way I should still be able to

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

earn my living by taking my vegetables to market to sell. But," she added, with a sigh, "you've got a master somewhere I'll be bound."

"Granny, who are you talking to?" said a pleasant little voice from the house; and a nice little boy came out of the door. He was six or seven years old, poorly but very neatly dressed. He looked at me, half admiringly, half afraid.

"Granny, may I stroke him?" he said.

"Of course you may, George, my dear," said the old woman, "but take care it does n't bite you."

The little boy stretched up his hand, but he was so short that he had to stand on tip-toe before he could reach my back. I did n't move, for fear of frightening him; I only turned my head round, and licked his hand.

"Oh, granny, granny! just see what a dear donkey! he's licked my hand!"

"It's very strange," said George's grandmother, "that he should be here all by himself. Go to the village, my dear, and ask whether any-

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

body has lost a donkey. Perhaps his master is very anxious about him."

George set off with a run, and I trotted after him. When he saw me come up, and then stand still by a mound on the roadside, he climbed up onto my back, and said, "Gee-up!"



"'WHAT DO YOU WANT, LADDIE,' SAID THE INNKEEPER."

I galloped along, and George was enchanted. When we got to the village inn, George cried, "Wo back!" and I stopped immediately.

"What do you want, laddie?" said the innkeeper.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

“Please, sir, do you know whose donkey this is?”

The innkeeper came out, and looked me all over. “No, my boy, he is n’t mine, and he does n’t belong to any one I know. Go and ask farther on.”

So George went right through the village asking the same question, but nobody had ever seen me before; and so we went back to the good old woman, who was still sitting with her work at the cottage door.

“So you can’t find his master, my dear? Very well, then, we can keep him till he is reclaimed. He must n’t stay out all night. Take him to poor Graycoat’s shed, and give him some hay and a pail of water.”

The next morning George came to fetch me out of the shed, and gave me some breakfast. Then he put a halter on me and took me round to the cottage door. The old woman put a light pack-saddle on my back and got up, and then George brought her a basket of vegetables, which she took on her knee, and we set off to market. Nobody in this market-town had ever



GEORGE PUTS THE DONKEY INTO GRAYCOAT'S SHED, AND FEEDS HIM.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

seen or heard of me, so I came back joyfully to my new home.

I lived there for four years, and was very happy. I did my work well and never did anybody any harm. I loved my good old mistress



“‘GEORGE’S FATHER SOLD ME TO A FARMER.’”

and little master. They never beat me or made me too tired, and they gave me the best food they could. We donkeys are not greedy; in summer the outside leaves of vegetables and plants that cows and horses won’t eat, and in

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

winter hay and potato-peel and carrots and turnips—that does for us.

But my happy life there was coming to an end. George's father was a soldier, and one day he came home. He brought home some money with him, so he left the army and bought a house in the town, and took his mother and little boy to live there, and sold me to a neighboring farmer.

CHAPTER III

I BECOME IDLE AND BAD

MY new master was not a bad sort of man, but he had what I thought was a most nasty habit of making everybody, including me, work very hard. He used to harness me to a little cart, and make me carry earth and manure and wood and many other things. I began to get idle; I did n't like going in harness, and I disliked market-days most particularly. It was n't that they made me draw too heavy a load or beat me, but I had to go without anything to eat from the morning till three or four o'clock in the afternoon. When the weather was hot, I used nearly to die of thirst, and yet I had to wait till everything was sold, and my master had got all his money, and had had a drink and passed the time of day with his friends.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

I was n't always very good in those days. I wanted them to treat me very kindly, and, as they did n't, I began to think of revenge. You see that donkeys are not always stupid, but you also see that I was getting bad.

On market-days in the summer the people at the farm always got up very early to cut the vegetables and gather the eggs and churn the butter, while I was still lying out in the meadow. I used to watch all these preparations going on, knowing that at eight o'clock they would come and fetch me to be harnessed to the cart.

Now, I have already said I hated all this very much, and so one day I determined to play them a trick.

In the meadow I had noticed a deep ditch filled with thistles and blackberry-bushes. "Now," I said to myself, "I 'll hide in that ditch, so that, when they come to fetch me, there 'll be no donkey anywhere to be seen." So, as soon as I saw the cart being filled and the people bustling about, I slipped off to the side of the field, and lay down very softly in the ditch, so that I was quite hidden by the bushes.



THE DONKEY PLAYS THE FARMER A TRICK BY HIDING IN A DITCH.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

In a little while I heard one of the farm-boys call me, and then run looking about for me everywhere, and then go back to the farm. In a few minutes I heard the farmer himself say, "He must have got through the hedge. But then, where could he have got through? There does n't seem to be a hole anywhere. Oh, I know! some one must have left the gate open. Who was it? Here, boys, run out and look in the fields over yonder. He can 't be far off. And make haste, for it's getting late, and we shan't be in time."

So the whole farm turned out to look for me. It was broiling weather, and after a while, the poor people came back very hot, limp, and panting for breath. The farmer said bad words, and declared that I must have been stolen, and that I was a great donkey to let any one steal me, and so on. Then he harnessed one of the horses to the cart, and drove off very late to market, in a very bad temper.

When I saw that all was quiet again, and that nobody was looking, I scrambled out of my ditch, and galloped off to the other end of the meadow,

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

so that they should n't suspect where I'd been, and then I opened my mouth and began to say, "Hee-haw! hee-haw!" with all my might.

At this noise, all the people in the farm rushed out.

"Hallo! why there he is!" said the shepherd.

"Where has he been all this while?" said the mistress.

"How has he got in again?" said the carter.

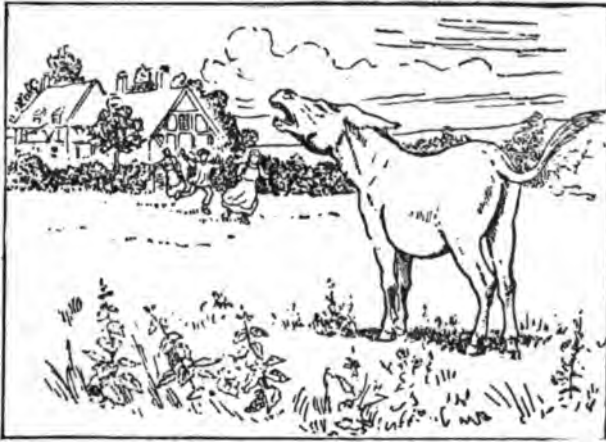
I was delighted to have got out of going to market, and went prancing up to them. They were so glad to see me; they patted me, and said I was a very good, clever donkey to have managed to escape from the thieves who had stolen me, till I got quite ashamed of myself, for I knew I did n't deserve all this, and that I did deserve the stick. Then they left me to graze all day in the meadow, and I should have enjoyed myself very much, if only my conscience had n't given me a very bad time of it, for such deceit.

The farmer was very much surprised to see me when he came home. The next day he went all round the meadow, and carefully stopped up

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

every hole in the hedge he could find, until there was n't room for a cat to get through.

The week passed quietly away until market-day came again, and then I hid myself in the ditch as before. The people at the 'farm



“I BEGAN TO SAY, ‘HEE-HAW! HEE-HAW!’”

could n't make it out, and thought that the thieves that stole me were unusually clever.

“This time,” said the farmer, “he must be really lost, and gone for good,” and he harnessed one of the horses and went off to market

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

as before. When everything was quiet I came out again, but this time I thought I had better not say "Hee-haw!" to let them know I was there, and when at last they found me, they did n't stroke or pat me, and they said so little that I thought they must suspect something. But I did n't care, and I said to myself:

"Ah, yes, my good friends, you 'll think yourselves very clever if you find me out, but I don't intend you shall," and so when market-day came round, I made for my ditch for the third time.

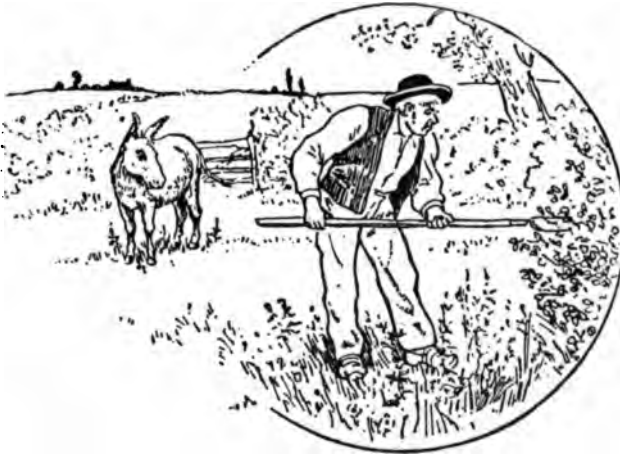
But scarcely was I safely hidden among the thistles and blackberry-bushes, when I heard the big watch-dog bark, and then the voice of the farmer say—

"Here, Rover, Rover, good dog!" Then "Seek, seek! go and look for him! Bite him well!" and in a moment Rover had pounced upon my hiding-place, and was growling and snapping at my heels in a most unpleasant manner. I made for the hedge, and tried to force a way through, but in vain.

"Good dog, nice Rover, good dog!" shouted the farmer, and he threw at me a lasso, which

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

caught me and stopped me short. Then he led me back and tied me up, and I heard that one of the farmer's little boys had been watching the meadow from a place where I could n't see him. and that he had been and told. Little wretch!



"HE CAREFULLY STOPPED UP EVERY HOLE."

I hated him, till my unhappiness and experience of wrong-doing made me repent.

After that I was much more severely treated. They shut me up, but I learned how to draw bolts and lift up latches with my teeth, and so

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

get out. All day long you heard the people of the farm saying, "Oh, there's that donkey again!" The farmer grumbled and beat me; I became worse and worse. I compared my wretched life now with the happy one I had led in former days under the same master, but instead of trying to leave off behaving badly I became more and more naughty and obstinate every day. One day I went into the kitchen-garden and ate up all the lettuces; another day I knocked down the little boy who had told tales about me; another day I drank up a bowl of cream that had been set outside the door ready for churning; I trod on the fowls, and bit the pigs, till at last the mistress said they could n't stand it any longer, and she begged her husband to sell me at the next fair.

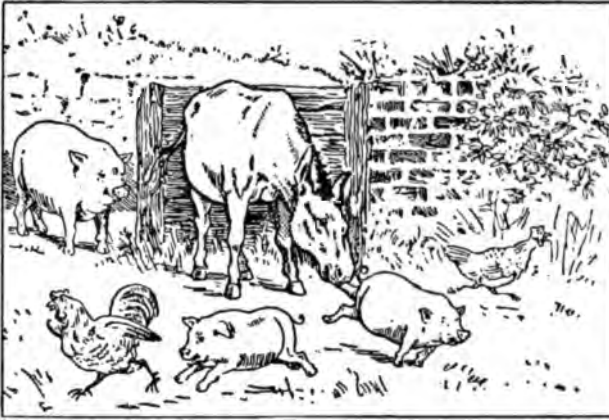
So, when the fair-day came, my master took me away. I should have liked to bite all of them well before I left, but I was afraid they would tell my new master how bad I was; and so I contented myself with being as rude as I could, and turning my back on them with a look of contempt.



THE DONKEY HAS BEHAVED SO BADLY THAT HIS MASTER SELLS HIM.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

The farmer sold me to a family where there was a little invalid girl whom I had to take out; but I did n't stay there long, for the little girl



“‘I TROD ON THE FOWLS, AND BIT THE PIGS.’”

died, and then her parents, who had never liked me, turned me adrift to go where I pleased, and to live as best I could.

CHAPTER IV

I WIN A RACE

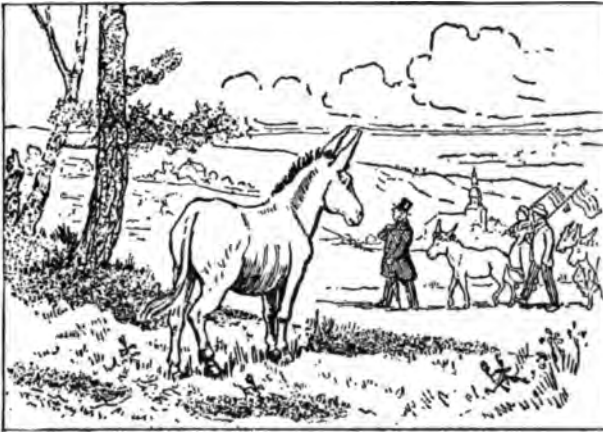
ALL the next winter I had no one to take care of me. I had to live in the forest, where I found scarcely enough to eat and drink to keep me from dying of hunger and thirst. I had plenty of time to think how bad I'd been; how happy I was until I had given myself over to laziness and spitefulness and revenge; and to make up my mind to turn over a new leaf if ever I got the chance.

When the spring came I went one day to a village on the edge of the forest, and was surprised to find quite a commotion there. The people were walking in processions; everybody had on their Sunday clothes; and, what was strangest of all, every donkey in the neighborhood seemed to be there. They were sleek and

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

fat; their heads were decorated with flowers and leaves, and not one of them was in harness or had a rider.

I went trotting up to see if I could find out what all this was about, when, all of a sudden,



“THE PEOPLE WERE WALKING IN PROCESSION.”

one of the boys who were standing there saw me, and shouted:

“Oh, I say, look here! here ’s a fine donkey!”

“My word!” said another, “how well groomed he is! and how fat and well fed!” and they roared with laughter.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

“I suppose he’s come to run in the donkey-race,” said a third, “but he won’t win the prize! No fear!”

I was very much annoyed at these rude jokes and personal remarks about myself; but I thought I should very much like to take part in the race, so I listened again.

“Where are they going to run?” asked an old dame, who had just come up.

“In the meadow by the mill,” said a man named Andrew.

“How many donkeys are there?” asked the old woman.

“Sixteen, Mother Evans, and the one that comes in first will win a silver watch and a bag of money.”

“Oh, deary me!” said Mother Evans, “I do wish I had a donkey. I should so like to have a watch. I’ve never had the money to buy one.”

I liked the look of this old woman; I was justly proud of my running; I had been so long in the forest that I was not too fat, as some of these prize donkeys were; and so I would take part in the race. I trotted up to the others, and



THE DONKEY LEARNS THAT THE WINNER OF THE RACE WILL RECEIVE A PRIZE.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

took my place among them, and then, to attract attention, I opened my mouth and brayed vigorously.

“Oh, you stop that!” cried out a man named Bill. “Hi! you there, donkey, you just stop that music will you? and get out of there! You can’t run, you shabby brute! and, besides, you don’t belong to anybody.”

I held my tongue, but I did n’t budge an inch. Some laughed, and others were getting angry, when old Mother Evans said:

“Well, he can have me for his mistress. I take him into my service from this minute. So now he can run for me.”

“Well,” said Bill, “do as you like, mother. Only if you want him to run, you’ve got to put sixpence into the bag the Squire’s got yonder.”

“All right, my dear,” said Mother Evans, and she hobbled off to where the Squire was sitting and paid her subscription into the bag.

“Very good,” said the Squire; “put Mrs. Evans’ name down, Richard.”

So the clerk put down my new mistress’s name. We were all drawn up in a line in the

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

meadow; the Squire said, "One, two, three, and away!" the boys who held the donkeys let them go with a parting whack, and away we galloped as hard as we could tear, while the crowd ran cheering by the side.

The other sixteen donkeys had not gone a hundred yards before I was in front of them all, an easy first. I even had time to turn round now and then, and see how savage they looked. They were so angry at a shabby donkey like me leaving them all behind, that some of them did n't look where they were going, and tumbled over one another, head over heels. Twice Bill's donkey came up even with me, but I always got in front again. At last he seized my tail in his mouth. It hurt me so horribly that I nearly fell down; but I plucked up courage, and with a sudden bound I whisked my tail out of his mouth and got away. I thought I would beat them all now, at any rate, and I flew along as if I'd had wings, so passed proudly before the winning-post, not only first, but quite a long way in front of all the rest, amid loud cheers from all those who had not got donkeys running themselves.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

The Squire sat at a table to give away the prizes, and Mother Evans, who was almost beside herself with delight, stroked and patted me, and took me up to the table with her to receive the first prize.



"HE CAN HAVE ME FOR HIS MISTRESS."

"Here, my good woman," said the Squire; and he was just going to hand the watch and the bag of money to the old woman.

"Please, your worship, it is n't fair!" cried Bill and Andrew. "It is n't fair! That donkey

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

does n't really belong to Mother Evans any more than it does to us! It was our donkeys that really got in first, not counting this one. The watch and money ought to be ours. It is n't fair!"

"Did Mrs. Evans pay her sixpence into the bag?" said the Squire.

"Well, your worship, she did, but"—

"Did any of you object to her doing so at the time?" asked the Squire.

"Well, no, your worship, but—"

"Did you raise any objection when the donkeys were just going to start?"

"Well, no, sir, but—"

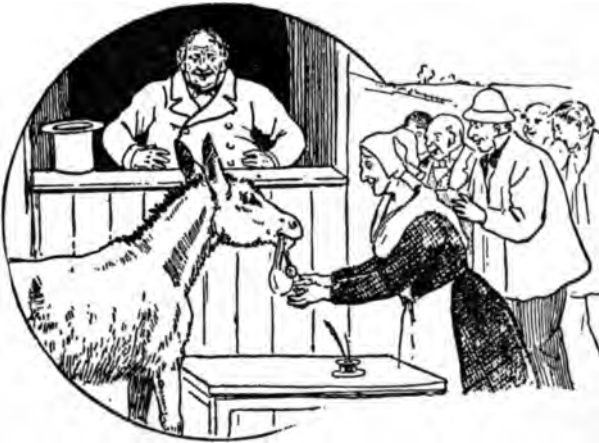
"Very well, then. It 's all perfectly fair, and Mrs. Evans gets the watch and bag of money."

"Please, sir, it is n't fair, it is n't fair! You—"

When I heard this, I at once put my head down on the table, and took up the watch and bag in my teeth, and put them into Mother Evans' hands. This intelligent action on my part made the people roar with laughter, and drew me thunders of applause.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

“There!” said the Squire, “the donkey has decided in favor of Mother Evans; and,” he added, with a smile, looking at Bill and Andrew, “I don’t think he is the biggest donkey present!”



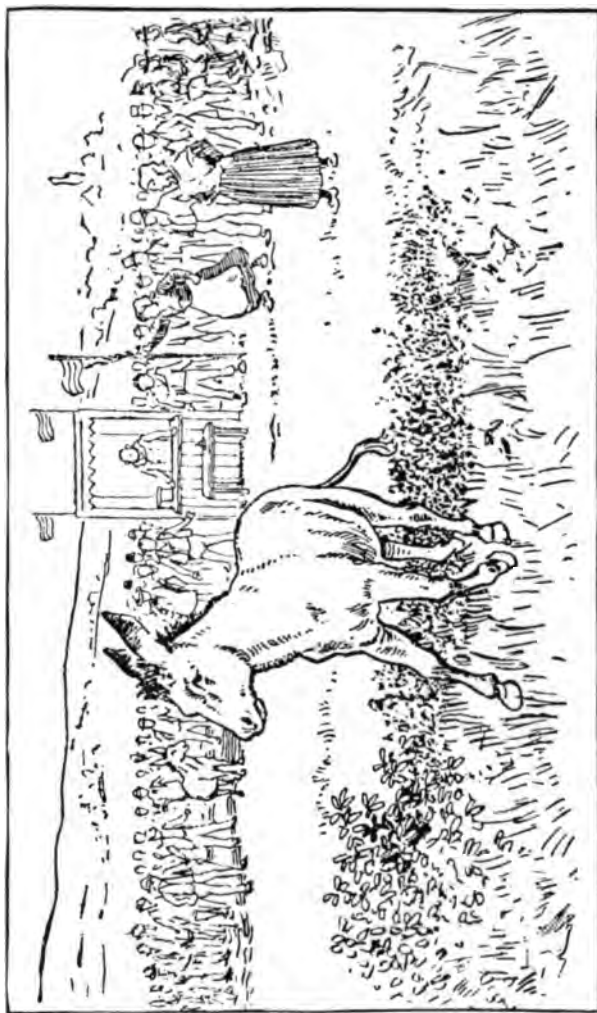
“‘I PUT THE WATCH AND BAG INTO HER HANDS.’”

“Bravo, your worship!” “Good for you!” resounded on all sides. And everyone began to laugh at Andrew and Bill, who went away looking very cross and ill-tempered.

And was I pleased? No, not at all. My pride was hurt. The Squire had been very rude to

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

me; he had actually put men, these stupid brutes of men, on the same level as an intelligent and right-minded donkey like myself! It was too much! I declined to stay in a place where I was so insulted, and so I turned tail and trotted away from such a disgusting set of people.



THE DONKEY, DISGUSTED AT THE TREATMENT GIVEN HIM, TROTS AWAY.

CHAPTER V

I MAKE NEW FRIENDS

PRESENTLY I stopped. I was in a meadow. I felt tired and sad, and my tail hurt. I was just asking myself whether donkeys were not a great deal better than human beings, when a soft little hand touched me, and a soft little voice said:

“Oh, poor donkey! How thin you are! Perhaps you ’ve been badly treated. Come home and see my grandma! She ’ll take good care of you.”

“I looked round. It was a nice little boy about five years old; his little sister, who was only three, was running by the side of their nurse.

“What ’s that you ’re saying, Master Jack?” said the nurse.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

“Oh, nursie, I am telling him to come home with us to see grandma.”

“Yes, yes!” cried the little girl, whose name was Janie; “and let me ride on his back. Nurse, up, up!”

The nurse put the little girl on my back, and Jack wanted to lead me, but of course I had no bridle on, so he came up and stroked me softly and whispered in my ear:

“Gee up, Neddy! Come along, dear Neddy!”

I was so pleased with this little boy’s trusting me, that I at once followed him all the way, occasionally touching his hand with my nose.

“Oh, nurse, nurse—look! He ’s kissing me!” cried Jack.

“Nonsense, my dear!” said the nurse. “He does that because he smells the piece of bread you ’ve got in your pocket.”

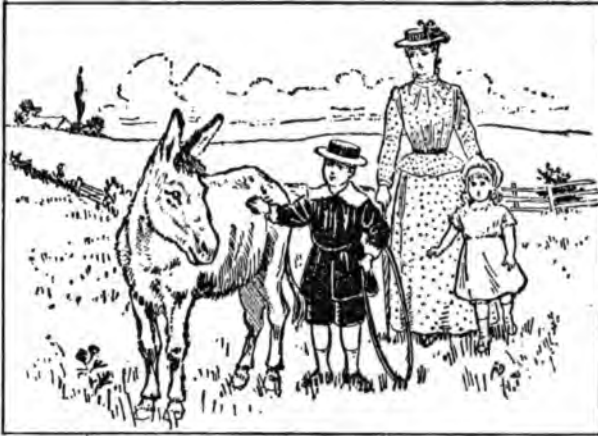
I was so hurt at this unkind remark from the nurse, that I turned my head away all the rest of the time we were going to the house of Jack and Janie’s grandmamma.

When we got there they left me at the door and ran in, and in a few minutes they returned,

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

pulling along a kind-looking and pretty old lady with white hair.

“Look, grandma, is n’t he a dear donkey?” said Jack, clasping his hands. “And oh, grandma, may we keep him?”



“‘POOR DONKEY! HOW THIN YOU ARE.’”

“Let me see him closer, my dears,” said the old lady, and she came down and patted me, and felt my ears, and put her hand in my mouth. I stood perfectly still, and was most careful not to bite her, even by mistake.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

“Well, he does look very gentle, my dears,” said the old lady. “Emily,” she added, to the nurse, “tell the coachman to make inquiries to see to whom he belongs, and if he is not reclaimed, we will keep him, at any rate for the present. Poor creature, how thin and neglected he looks! Jack, go and call Robert; I will have him put in the stable, with something to eat and drink.”

The stableman came and led me away, and Jack and Janie followed. I had two horses and another donkey for companions in the stable. Robert made me a nice litter of straw to sleep on, and then went and fetched me a measure of oats.

“Oh, Robert, give him more than that!” cried Jack, “it’s such a little, and Emily says he ran in the village race. He must be so tired and hungry. More, more!”

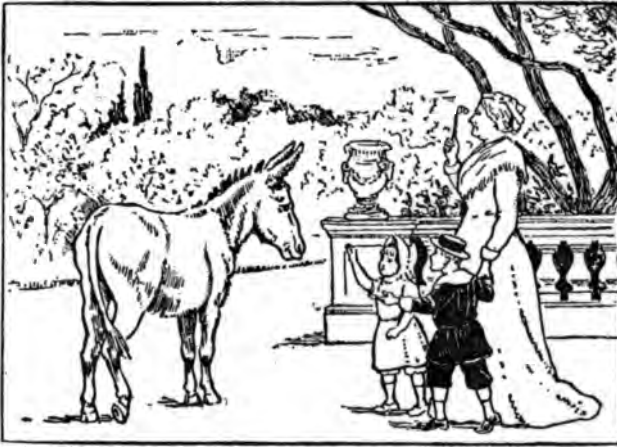
“But, Master Jack,” said Robert, “if you give him too many oats he will get too lively, and then you won’t be able to ride him, nor Miss Janie either.”

“Oh, he is such a kind donkey, I’m sure he

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

will go quietly for us. Do, Robert, do please give him some more!"

So Robert gave me another measure of oats, and a large pail of water, and some hay, and I



"LET ME SEE HIM CLOSER, MY DEARS."

made an enormous supper, and then lay down on my straw, and slept like a king.

The next day I had nothing to do but to take the children for an hour's ride. Jack brought me my oats himself, and, paying no heed to Robert, who told him not to, he gave me enough

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for three donkeys of my size. I ate it all up, and felt delighted at having so many good things.

But on the third day I felt very unwell. My head ached. I had indigestion. I was very feverish. I could n't eat anything at all, either oats or hay. I could n't even get up, and was still lying stretched on my straw when Jack came to see me.

"Why, Neddy is still in bed!" cried Jack. "Get up, Neddy, it is breakfast-time. I'll give you your oats."

I tried to lift up my head, but it fell heavily back on the straw.

"Oh, he 's ill, Neddy 's ill!" cried Jack, in a great fright. "Robert, quick, quick! Neddy 's very ill!"

"What 's the matter?" said Robert, coming in at the stable door. "I filled his manger early this morning. Ah," he added, looking at the hay in the manger, which was quite untouched, "there must be something wrong."

He felt my ears; they were very hot, and my sides were throbbing. He looked serious.



THE DONKEY FINDS NOT ONLY NEW FRIENDS, BUT COMFORTABLE QUARTERS.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

“Oh, what is it? What is it?” cried poor Jack, almost in tears.

“He ’s got the fever, Master Jack, from over-eating. I told you how it would be if you would give him all those oats. And now we shall have to have the vet.”

“What ’s the vet.?” said Jack, looking still more scared.

“The veterinary surgeon, the animals’ doctor,” replied Robert. “You see, Master Jack, I told you not to do it. This poor donkey has lived very poorly all the winter, as any one can see from his thinness and the state of his coat. Then he got very hot in the donkey-race. He ought to have had cool grass to eat, and a very few oats, but you went and gave him as much as he could eat.”

“Oh, poor Neddy, poor Neddy! He ’ll die, and it ’s all my fault!” and poor little Jack burst out crying.

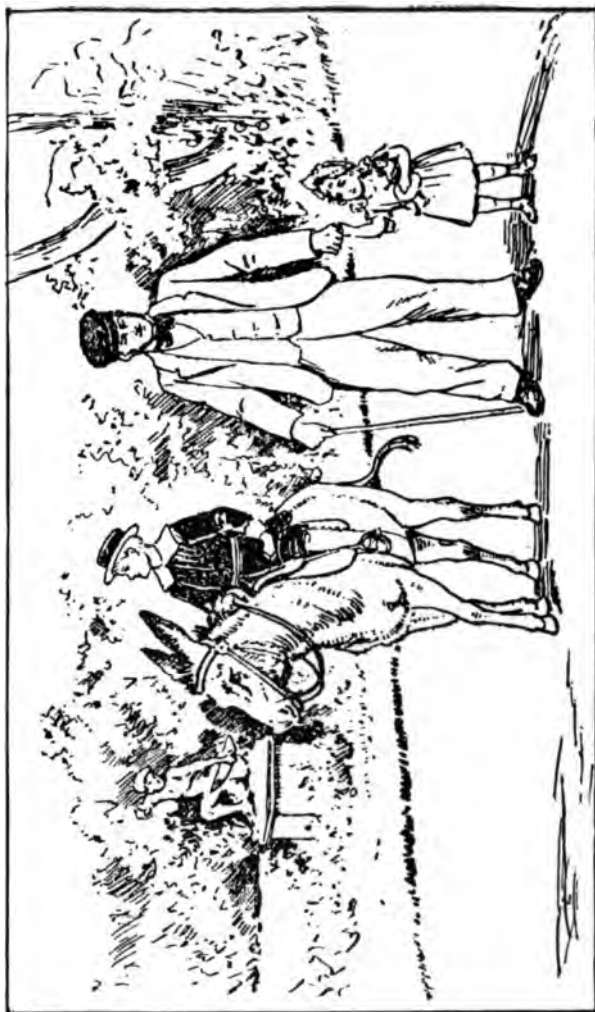
“Come, Master Jack, he won’t die this time; but we shall have to bleed him, and then turn him out to grass.”

Robert sent for the veterinary surgeon, and

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

told Jack to go away. Then he took a lancet, and made a little hole with it in a vein in my neck. It bled, and I began to feel better. My head was n't so heavy, and I fetched my breath more easily; I was able to get up. Robert then stopped the bleeding, and in about an hour took me out, and left me in a fresh cool meadow.

I was better, but not yet well, and it was a whole week before I could do anything except rest in the meadow and crop the grass. Jack and Janie took the greatest care of me. They came to see me several times a day. They picked grass for me, so that I should n't have to stoop my head down to get it for myself. They brought me cool juicy lettuces from the kitchen-garden, and cabbage-leaves, and carrots; and every evening they came to see me home to my stable, and there filled my manger for my supper with what I liked best of all, potato-peel and salt. Jack wanted to give me his pillow one night, because he thought that my head was too low when I was asleep; and Janie wanted to fetch the counterpane off her bed to cover me up with, and keep me warm. Another day they



THE DONKEY FINDS HIS WORK IS PLEASANT AND NOT HARD.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

came and put little bits of cotton-wool round my feet, for fear they should get cold. I was quite unhappy at not knowing how to show them my gratitude for such great kindness; but, unfor-



“‘THEY BROUGHT ME COOL JUICY LETTUCES.’”

tunately, I could understand all they said without being able to say anything myself.

At last I was well again, and with Janie and Jack and some cousins of theirs who also came to stay with their grandmamma, I passed a very happy summer.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW EXPERIENCE

WHEN the summer was nearly over, several of the children's fathers and mothers came to stay at my mistress's house, and the next day it was arranged that the gentlemen were to go out partridge-shooting. Two of the bigger boys, who were about thirteen or fourteen years of age, and whose names were Teddy and Dick, were to be allowed to go shooting with their fathers for the first time, and a gentleman of the neighborhood, with his son Norman, who was nearly fifteen, was also to join the party.

The next morning Teddy and Dick were up before anybody else, and marched proudly about with their guns in their hands, and their game-bags slung across their shoulders, talking of all the game they were going to bring home.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

“I say, Teddy,” said Dick, “when our game-bags are quite full, where shall we put the rest of the game we shall shoot?”

“That ’s just what I was wondering,” said



“MARCHED PROUDLY ABOUT WITH THEIR GUNS.”

Teddy. “I know: we ’ll put Neddy’s panniers on, and take him with us.”

I did n’t like this at all, because I knew these young sportsmen would fire at everything they saw, and would be quite as likely to shoot me as a partridge. But there was no help for it, and

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

so when the party assembled at the front door, I was there too, ready, and harnessed by the boys.

“Bless me!” said Norman’s father when, after a mile or two, he joined them with his son, “what ’s that donkey for?”

“That ’s to fetch home the young gentlemen’s game, sir,” said the keeper, touching his hat, with a grin.

The partridges rose in great numbers. I stayed prudently at the rear. The gentlemen and the boys made a broad line across the field; shots resounded all along the line; the dogs pricked up their ears, watched to see where the game fell down, and fetched it in. I kept an eye on those young boasters; I saw them shoot, and shoot, and shoot again, but they never hit anything, not even when the three of them aimed at the same partridge at once, for it only flew all the better. At the end of two hours the gentlemen’s game-bags were full, and those of the boys still empty.

“Dear me!” said one of the fathers, as they left the field to go to a neighboring farmhouse



THE BOYS EAT AS THOUGH THEY NEVER SAW FOOD BEFORE.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

(where they had left their dinner), and passed close to me. "What! the panniers still empty! Ah, I suppose you have stuffed all your game into your game-bags. My dear boys, if you fill them so full, they 'll burst!" and the gentleman looked at the other sportsmen and laughed.

Dick, Teddy, and Norman got very red, but they said nothing, and presently they were all seated round a capital basket of provisions under a tree—a chicken-pie, ham, hard-boiled eggs, cheese, and cake. The boys were ravenously hungry, and ate enough to frighten the people who passed by.

"Well, boys," said Norman's father, "so you 've not been very lucky. Neddy does n't walk as if he were over-burdened with the game you 've shot."

"No," said Norman; "you see, father, we had no dogs to fetch in the partridges we shot. You had all the dogs."

"Oh, you have shot some, have you? Why did n't you go and fetch them in yourselves?"

"Well, father, you see we did n't see them fall, and so we did n't know where they were."

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

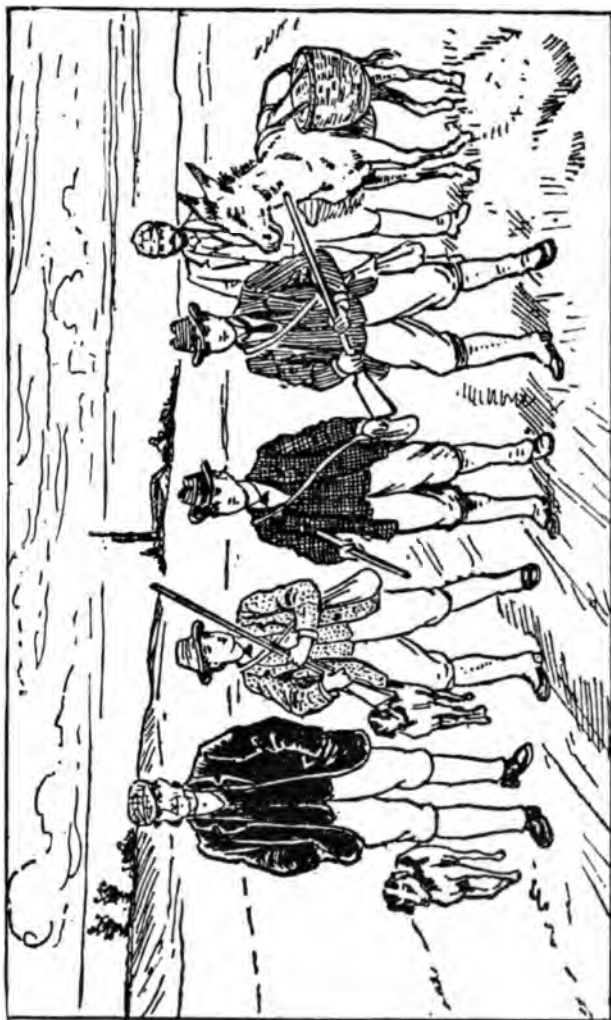
At this all the gentlemen, and even the keepers, roared with laughter, and the boys reddened angrily.

“Well, then, boys,” said the father of Dick and Teddy, “we will stay here and rest for an hour, and you shall go with two of the keepers and all our dogs, and see if you have better luck this time in finding the partridges you shoot, but can’t see fall.”

“Oh, how jolly! Thanks awfully, father. Come on, Dick; come on, Norman; now we shall have our bags as full as theirs.”

The gentlemen told the keepers to keep close to the boys, and not let them do anything rash. They started off with the dogs, and I followed some way behind, as usual. The partridges rose in numbers, as they did in the morning; the dogs were on the watch, but they brought no game in, because there was none to bring.

At last Norman got impatient at having as yet shot nothing, and seeing one of the dogs stop and prick up his ears, he thought a partridge must be just going to rise, and that it would be much easier to shoot it while it was still on the



THE BOYS START OFF WITH KEEPERS AND DOGS. THE DONKEY KEEPS TO THE REAR.

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ground than when it was flying. So he took aim and fired.

There was a yell of pain, and the dog made a leap into the air, and then rolled over, quite dead.



“‘YOU ’VE SHOT OUR VERY BEST DOG.’”

“‘You young idiot!’” shouted the keeper, as he ran to the spot, “‘you ’ve been and shot our very best dog! Here ’s a pretty end of your fine sport!’”

Norman stood speechless from fright. Dick and Teddy looked scared out of their wits. The

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

keeper restrained his anger, and stood looking at the poor dog without another word.

I went up to see who was the unfortunate victim of Norman's stupid recklessness. Judge of my horror when I recognized my old friend Jenny! I had known Jenny as a puppy, when she lived at the dog-fancier's at the corner of the market where I used to carry vegetables in bygone days. Poor old Jenny! She and I had been such friends! To think she should have come to this! That wretched, conceited boy!

We turned back towards the farm, a sad procession. The keeper put Jenny's body into one of my panniers, and walked along, saying bad words to himself; the boys followed, with hanging heads and downcast looks; my one consolation lay in the severe scolding they would get, and serve them right.

The sportsmen were still sitting under the tree, and were surprised when they saw us coming. Seeing that something looked wrong, and that one of my panniers was hanging heavily down, they got up and came quickly towards us. The boys hung back; the keeper went forward.



NORMAN'S FATHER CORRECTS HIS CONCEITED SON.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

“What have they shot?” asked one of the gentlemen. “Is it a sheep or a calf?”

“It’s nothing to laugh at, sir,” replied the keeper; “it’s our very best dog, Jenny. That young gentleman shot her, thinking she was a partridge.”

“Jenny! My word! Catch me taking boys out shooting again!”

“Come here, Norman,” said his father. “Just see to what a pass your idiotic and ridiculous conceit has brought you! Say good-bye to your friends, sir, and go straight home at once! You will put your gun in my room, and you will not lay a finger on it again till you have learned a little reason and a more modest opinion of yourself!”

“But, father,” said Norman, trying to look as if he did not care, “everybody knows that all great sportsmen sometimes shoot their dogs by mistake!”

His father looked at him for a moment, and then, turning to the others with an air of disgust, he said:

“Gentlemen, I really must apologize to you

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

for having ventured to bring with me to-day a boy who has so little sense of decent behavior. I never imagined he was capable of such silly impertinence." He then turned towards his son, and said, severely:



"THE BOYS BURIED MY FRIEND IN THE GARDEN."

"You have heard my order, sir. Go at once!" Norman hung his head and departed in confusion.

"You see, boys," said Dick and Teddy's father, "what comes of conceit, of thinking you

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

are so much cleverer than you really are. This might have happened to either of you. You were so very sure that nothing was easier than shooting, and this is the result. You have all three been perfectly absurd the whole morning; you scoffed at our advice and experience, and now you have caused the death of my poor Jenny. It is quite clear that you are too young to be allowed to go shooting, so you can go back to your boys' games, and it will be better for all concerned."

Dick and Teddy hung their heads without a word. The party turned sadly homewards, and, after tea, the boys buried my poor friend in the garden.

CHAPTER VII

I HEAR MYSELF CALLED CLEVER

A FEW days after this there was a fair in the next village, and all my mistress's grandchildren were to be taken there by their fathers and mothers for a treat. There were fifteen of them altogether, or sixteen including me, for little Jack and his cousin Harry rode on my back, and the rest walked or drove in two carriages.

When we got to the fair we heard some people talking about a wonderful performing donkey that was said to be very clever, and that would begin his tricks in ten minutes at the other end of the meadow where the fair was being held.

"Oh, father, we must go and see him," said Teddy. "Please, may we?"

"Certainly, my boy; we ought to see this per-

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

forming donkey, though, for my part, I don't believe he could beat Neddy, there, for intelligence and sagacity."

I was much pleased to hear the gentleman's good opinion of me, so I headed the little pro-



"JACK AND HIS COUSIN RODE ON MY BACK."

cession to the other end of the field. Jack's mother lifted him and Harry down off my back, and stood them upon a bench, close to the path that was left open for people to come into the enclosure, which was surrounded with seats. I

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

was left outside, just behind my two little friends.

In a few minutes the showman appeared, leading in the donkey that was supposed to be so clever. He was a poor, dismal-looking creature, who looked as if he wanted a good meal.

“Jack,” said little Harry to his cousin, loud enough for me to hear, “I don’t think that donkey looks very clever. I ’m sure he ’s not nearly so clever as our dear old Neddy.”

I thought so, too, and was very much pleased to hear Harry say so; so I thought to myself, “I ’ll let them all know it before long, or my name’s not Neddy,” and I left the place where I had been standing, and took up my position in the pathway that had been left for the people to come in by.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” began the showman, “I have the honor to introduce to you Mr. Muffles, the wonderful performing donkey. This donkey, ladies and gentlemen, is not such a donkey as he looks. He knows a great deal, a great deal more than some of you. He is a donkey without peer. Come, Muffles, show the



THE SHOWMAN LEADS IN THE DISMAL-LOOKING AND HUNGRY DONKEY.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

company what you can do. Make your bow, and let these ladies and gentlemen see that you 've learned manners."

The donkey went forward two or three steps, and bent his head in a melancholy fashion. I was most indignant with the showman; I thought to myself, "It 's quite easy to see that this poor Muffles has been taught his tricks at the rope's end"; and I made up my mind to be revenged on that man before the performance was over.

"Now, Muffles, take this nosegay, and give it to the prettiest lady here."

Muffles took the bunch of flowers in his teeth, and walked sadly all round the ring, and at last went and dropped the nosegay into the lap of a very ugly, fat woman. She was close to me, and I could see that she had a piece of sugar concealed in her hand. "The old cheat!" I thought. "Of course, she 's the showman's wife." I was so disgusted with what looked like the donkey's bad taste that, before any one could stop me, I had leaped right into the ring, had seized the nosegay off the woman's lap in

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

my teeth, and had trotted round and laid it at the feet of little Janie.

The crowd all clapped me vigorously. They wondered who I was. "So intelligent!" they said to each other. Muffles' master, however, did not seem pleased. As for Muffles himself, he took no notice whatever. I began to think he must really be rather a stupid animal, and that isn't common with us donkeys.

When the audience was quiet again, the showman said:

"Now, Muffles, you've shown us the prettiest lady here. Now go and point out the silliest person present," and so saying he gave him a big dunce's cap made of colored paper and adorned with rosettes.

Muffles took it in his teeth, and went straight to a heavy-looking fat boy, with a face exactly like a pig, and put it on his head. The fat boy was so like the fat woman that it was quite easy to see he must be the showman's son, and of course his confederate.

"Good!" said I to myself, "now's the time!"



THE SHOWMAN'S DONKEY RECEIVES INSTRUCTIONS.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

And before they could think of stopping me, I had seized the cap off the boy's head, and was pursuing the showman himself round and round the ring. The crowd roared with laughter, and



“‘I LEAPED RIGHT INTO THE RING.’”

clapped till they were tired. All at once, the showman tripped, and went down on one knee; I profited by this to put the cap firmly on his head, and to ram it down till it covered his chin.

The showman said bad words, and danced

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

about trying to tear the cap off, and I stood on my hind legs and capered about just like him, and the crowd nearly died of laughing. "Well done, donkey! Bravo, donkey! It 's you that 's the real performing donkey!" they shouted.

There was no doing anything more after this. Hundreds of people crowded into the ring, and were so anxious to pat me that I was afraid they would tear me to pieces. The people from our own village, who knew me, were tremendously proud of me, and before very long all the people in the place were telling wonderful and most exaggerating tales of my intelligence and adventures. They said I had once been at a fire, and worked a fire-engine all by myself; that I had gone up a ladder to the third story, opened my mistress's door, woke her up, picked her up by her night-gown, and jumped with her safely to the ground off the roof. They said that another time I had, all alone, slain fifty robbers, strangling them one after the other with my teeth when they were asleep, so cleverly that no one had time to wake up and give the alarm to the others; and that I had then gone into the

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

caves where the robbers lived, and had set free a hundred and fifty prisoners whom the robbers had captured, and were fattening down there to kill and eat. And another time, they said, I had run in a race, and beaten all the swiftest horses



"THEY SAID I HAD GONE UP A LADDER."

in the country, and had run seventy-five miles in five hours without stopping.

The crowd got thicker and thicker to hear those wonderful tales, and was now so dense that some of the people could hardly breathe,

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

and the police had to come and disperse the crowd. It was with the greatest difficulty, even with the help of the policemen, that I was able to get away, and I was obliged to pretend both to bite and to kick in order to clear a path; but of course I did n't hurt anybody.

At last I got free from the crowd, and out into the road. I looked about for Jack and Harry and the others, but they were nowhere to be seen; for directly they saw that the crowding was becoming dangerous, the children's fathers and mothers had hurried them away. I thought perhaps it was so, and, losing no time, I took the road home. Before I had gone a mile I overtook them, fifteen people packed into the two carriages; and by tea-time we had all got home safe and sound, everybody quite delighted with my remarkable sagacity.

But, after it was all over, I began to think of the unfortunate showman, and after a time I felt very, very sorry for the unkind trick I had played him.



TO REGAIN HIS LIBERTY THE DONKEY CLEARS A PATH WITH HIS HEELS.

CHAPTER VIII

I HAVE MY REVENGE

I NEVER could like that boy Norman; I thought him so cowardly, and at the same time so conceited. I could n't forget that he had killed poor Jenny, my doggy friend. So one day, when he came to my mistress's house on a visit, and insisted on having a ride on my back, "Now," thought I to myself, "I 'll have my revenge."

Just beyond the garden there was a wood; and beyond the wood there was a very deep and very dirty ditch, generally full to the brim with mud. Norman had been boasting what an excellent rider he was, and invited the others to come with him through the wood, and to see him jump the ditch; and they all came, though they did n't believe he could do it.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

Scarcely had they started, Norman on my back, and the others running by the side along the path through the wood, when I threw up my heels and dashed aside off the path into the bushes. "All right," shouted Norman, "you run on by the path as far as the ditch, and see whether I don't jump it before you get there."

"Oh, will you?" I said to myself. I went along quietly for a little way, where the bushes were thin and fairly far apart, and then, without any warning, I plunged right into a thicket of brambles. My skin is tough, so I didn't mind them, but Norman's face and hands and stockinged legs were nicely scratched, and the thorns stuck into his clothes from head to foot. He looked a nice object by the time we got to the ditch; he had quite lost his boastful idea of jumping over it, and did all he could to make me stop and let him get off my back.

"Not if I know it," thought I. "I shall never get such a chance again of punishing you for shooting Jenny," and so I galloped along the edge of the ditch, and when I had reached a very steep and slippery place, I suddenly stopped

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

short, and jerked Norman off my back. He was unable to gain his footing, and pitched headlong into the thick, black mud.

Just then the other children came racing down the path; but what was their surprise and alarm



“NORMAN’S FACE AND HANDS WERE NICELY SCRATCHED.”

to see me gazing into the ditch, and Norman nowhere to be seen.

“Norman! Norman!” they shouted, “where are you?”

“Here—oh, help!” said a half-stifled voice at

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

last. They looked down into the ditch, and there was Norman, half-drowned in mud; he had recovered his feet, and was standing on the bottom of the ditch; but it was nearly five feet deep, and the mud was up to his neck. "Help me out! oh, help me out! I shall be drowned!"

Norman's screams attracted the attention of two farm laborers who were passing near at hand, and they ran up to see what was the matter. In a few minutes they had got a long pole out of a fence close by, and had let one end down into the ditch for Norman to catch hold of; and then the men pulled slowly at the other end of the pole, and at last Norman managed to scramble out. He was soaked through and through with mud, and his teeth were chattering with cold and terror. I began to be sorry for what I had done, and kept behind the children, who were hurrying Norman home as fast as he could go.

The next day I heard that Norman was very ill; he was obliged to stay in bed, and the doctor was afraid he was going to have a bad fever,

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

and be ill a long while. He shook his head when the children went to inquire after Norman, and advised my mistress not to let the children ride me at present, until Norman was better, and could tell them how the accident had happened.



"I JERKED NORMAN OFF MY BACK."

I knew it was not an accident, and began to be dreadfully afraid of what I had done. When Norman got well enough to tell them all about it, and how badly I had behaved, they all looked very serious.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

The next morning, when Robert, the stableman, came as usual to fetch me to be saddled and to take Jack and Janie for a ride, he said nothing to me, and, to my great alarm, groomed and saddled the other donkey that lived in the stable instead. In a few minutes Jack came in at the door, his face very sad, and his eyes full of tears.

"Neddy," he said, "I 'm so very, very sorry, but grandma won't let me ride you any more. She 's afraid you 'll be naughty again, and kick me off, as you did poor Norman. Oh, Neddy dear, how could you?"

I was dreadfully upset by this, and wanted to explain to Jack that I was only nasty to Norman because I hated him, and that I would n't think of doing it to him, or Janie, or anybody else whom I loved, and who were kind to me. But, alas! I did n't know how to say this to Jack, and I only drooped my head, and touched his shoulder with my nose.

"Mind, Master Jack," said Robert, "don't let that vicious donkey touch you. Perhaps he 'll bite you. Come away, my dear, directly,"

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

and Robert seized Jack with his hand, and pulled him away.

“Yes, nasty horrid brute!” said Teddy, who, with all the others, had come to the stable door. “Of course, Norman is n’t always nice, but



“HE WAS SOAKED THROUGH AND THROUGH WITH MUD.”

Neddy had no business to try and drown him. I ’ll take good care I don’t have anything more to do with such a brute!”

“More will I,” said Dick, and all the others. Jack looked very sorrowful, but as Robert put

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

him on the other donkey's back and led him away he looked round and said to me in his usual kind little voice :

“Poor, poor Neddy ! Never mind, I ’ll always love you all the same, though I must n’t ride you any more, and perhaps some day you’ll be good again, won’t you, dear Neddy ?”

I could have cried when I heard this. It was more than I could bear. As soon as Jack was gone, I crept out of the stable, and made my way into the fields. Then I lay down and thought of all the wicked things I had done in my life : how I had knocked my first mistress down, and broken her nose ; how I had deceived the farmer, and how revengeful and evil I had been when he punished me for my deceit. I thought of all the happy life I had led in my present home, and how very, very kind they had all been to me until I had done this wicked thing to Norman. Norman had killed poor Jenny, it is true ; but then he did n’t do it on purpose, and his father had punished him for it ; what business had I to give way to feelings of revenge ? I thought of dear little Janie and Jack, and how

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

good and kind they had been to me when I was ill; and when I remembered that, owing to my wickedness, they were not to be allowed to ride me any more, I felt so unhappy that I could n't keep still any longer. I began to tear



"HE SADDLED THE OTHER DONKEY."

about as hard as I could, trying to run away from myself, but the faster I ran, the more miserable I was, until at last I ran my head right up against a stone wall, and dropped down stunned.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

When I came to myself it was late in the afternoon, and I could n't tell where I was. Three people were sitting a little way off by the roadside, but their backs were turned, so they didn't see me. What was my astonishment to recognize the man who owned the performing donkey, Muffles, with his wife and son! They looked unhappy and hungry, and I learned from what they said that poor Muffles had been badly hurt by the crowd that day at the fair, and that they had been obliged to leave him for a time with a kind farmer who offered to turn him out to grass in his field, while they went about looking for a little work to keep them alive until Muffles was once more well enough to perform at fairs.

When I heard all this, I felt still more unhappy, for it was all my fault that Muffles had been hurt, and the showman's family obliged to go hungry because they had no money to buy food. Then I suddenly thought how, that morning, little Jack had hoped I would some day turn good again. "I can begin to be good again this very minute," thought I. "I can follow



THE DONKEY, WHO HAS RUN AWAY, MEETS OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

these people to the next village, and earn some money for them by performing tricks." So up I jumped, and trotted behind them till they stopped at the door of a little inn, and asked the host if he would let them stay there that night.



"ROBERT LED HIM AWAY."

They said they had no money to pay for a night's lodging, but perhaps he could give them some work to do instead. The host shook his head, and said that he had plenty of people in

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

his house to do all his work, and that the showman must go somewhere else.

Just as they were turning sorrowfully away from the door, I trotted up, bowed to the innkeeper, and then stood up on my hind legs and



“‘I TROTTED BEHIND THEM TO A LITTLE INN.’”

began to dance. I did several of the tricks that Muffles was accustomed to do, and I did them so gracefully that quite a large crowd collected. At last I thought it was time to make the collection, so I picked up the showman's hat in my teeth and took it round to everybody in the



THE DONKEY TRIES TO ATONE FOR HIS UNKINDNESS.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

crowd. Such a lot of coppers fell into the hat, that I had to go twice and turn them into the showman's wife's apron, before I had finished; and when they came to count all the money up, it came to nine and threepence! So the showman and his wife and boy were able to have a good supper and a night's lodging at the inn, and then they gave me a supper and a night's lodging in the stable.

The next morning I followed them to the next place, which was a small town, and we gave two or three performances in different parts of the town; so that before dinner-time I had earned for the showman no less than twenty-three and sixpence, and then I thought I had atoned for my unkindness to him on the day of the fair, and that I would go back and try and show Jack that I was good now.

I soon found the right road, and got to the house in the afternoon when everything was quiet, and all the people indoors at tea. Just as I came up to the high wall of the kitchen garden, on my way to the stable, I saw a tramp trying to climb over it, doubtless intending to steal things

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

out of the garden. I made a jump, and caught the tramp's foot in my mouth, and pulled him down. He called out for help, but in another moment he fell, and knocked his head, and lay still. At this moment, another tramp came running up; I gave him a kick as he passed me, and stretched him flat by his friend. The second tramp howled so loudly that all the servants came running out of the house to see what was the matter. I was still standing over the tramps ready to kick them if they offered to get up. When the servants questioned them, the tramps' replies were so suspicious that their legs and hands were tied, and they were taken into the house, and the police sent for.

So I had saved my good mistress's garden, and perhaps several other people's houses, from being robbed. Every one was so pleased with my intelligence that they said I should be forgiven for my past wickedness, and that the bigger boys should ride me for a time; and if they found me always gentle and quiet, then perhaps they would let Janie and Jack ride me as before.



THE REPENTANT DONKEY IS ABLE TO CATCH A THIEF.

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

To crown all, I heard in a few days that Norman was nearly well again, and that he bore me no ill-will, for he said he thought I could n't have done it on purpose, but that I must have seen something or other in the path, perhaps a toad or a piece of paper, that frightened me and made me run away. How dreadfully ashamed of myself I felt when I heard this! After all, Norman seemed a much better and more generous boy than I had at first imagined. At any rate, he was not revengeful.

CONCLUSION.

FROM that day onward I lived a very happy life. My kind old mistress said that I should never be sent away, or want for anything, but should remain with the family as long as I lived, and that they would do all in their power to take care of me. Jack had loved me even when I was wicked and miserable, so I was always looked upon as Jack's donkey, even when Jack was at home in London. He always paid his grandmamma a long visit every summer, until he was ten years old, and then he went away with Janie and his father and mother to Australia; and then I was considered to be Harry's donkey, because Harry, most often of all her grandchildren, stayed in the country with his grandmamma. Harry is not so good as Jack was, but he is a kind boy, and never treats me roughly, and he always takes great care of me,

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

and calls me his dear old Neddy. I am getting old now, and perhaps I sha'n't live very much longer, and so last winter I began to write this story of my life and adventures, because I want you to treat all of us donkeys kindly, and to remember that we are often much more sensible than some human beings.

Your affectionate friend,

NEDDY.

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